

# Argumentative Paper

## English Composition II

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The research process is a methodical means of obtaining information. This worksheet outlines a few basic steps to follow as you do the research for your paper: define a topic, develop a search strategy, locate sources of information, and evaluate the information.

Use this worksheet as a guide for doing the research for your paper. Because it is a general guide for doing library research, you may have some questions about your research that this worksheet does not address. If you need additional help in locating information please ask the Library staff or your instructor for assistance.

You may revise your thesis statement as you do your research. However, if you decide to completely change your topic, ask for another copy of this worksheet *after* you have checked with your instructor.

You will need to access some of the Web sites listed in this worksheet via the Library home page. The URL for that page is ***<http://www.cloud.edu/library>***.

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# STEP 1: DEFINE YOUR TOPIC

This step will help you focus your research by setting limits on your topic. When you complete this step you will have developed a more defined topic and a thesis statement.

## Select your topic

Select a topic you are interested in debating. If you cannot think of a topic on your own you may want to look through materials in the Library to get an idea:

- ▶ current magazines and newspapers
- ▶ **10,000 Ideas for Term Papers, Projects, Reports and Speeches** (Call number REF 808.02 L188t)
- ▶ **Sources for "Controversial Issues" Research**  
(San Diego Mesa College –  
<http://www.sdmesa.sdccd.cc.ca.us/library/issues.htm>)

**If you choose a topic you are enthusiastic about, you naturally will write about it with more conviction!**

**The general purpose of this paper is to:**

**The general topic of my paper is:**

## Set limits on your research

The prospect of doing research can be intimidating. You can take control of your research by setting limits on it. Answer the following about the assignment:

- √ **My paper should be \_\_\_\_\_ pages long.**
- √ **My information cannot be more than: \_\_\_\_\_ months or years old. (circle one)**
- √ **I have done a quick scan of a periodical index to know there is enough information readily available for the length of paper I am to write. (See Step 2 for a list of indexes.)**  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
- √ **My topic could be broken down into these controversies:**

**My revised topic is:**

**My thesis statement is:**

If your topic embodies a number of controversies, you may need to concentrate on only one of them.

√ **Three points I want to make about this topic:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**If you cannot think of three points, you may want to find some background information to brush up on the topic.**

## STEP 2: DEVELOP A SEARCH STRATEGY

This step will help you decide what research tools are most appropriate for finding information on your topic, and what subject headings might be used for these tools.

### Determine types of information needed

There are two questions you should consider before you begin searching for information. Your answers will determine where you will look for information.

#### 1. Do you want current or historical information?

Although your topic may be one of perennial concern, your information should be the most **current** you can find. The best sources for current information are *periodicals* and *newspapers* because they are published and distributed relatively quickly. Books are less current because they take several months or years to compile and publish. They are usually used for historical information.

#### 2. Do you want popular or scholarly information?

Because your audience will be a mix of people with varying amounts of expertise on your topic, and therefore would not understand specialized jargon, you probably will want to use **popular** periodicals. Popular periodicals include topics that can be read and understood by the general public. Scholarly periodicals include articles written for a professional audience, and they use subject-specific terminology.

#### Periodical indexes (via the LRC Web site):

- \_\_\_ Expanded Academic ASAP
- \_\_\_ InfoTrac OneFile
- \_\_\_ subject-specific indexes are also available

#### Newspaper articles:

- \_\_\_ Westlaw Campus Research- News & Information
- \_\_\_ Newspapers Online link on the LRC Web
- \_\_\_ Newsbank – America's Newspapers

#### Statistical Information:

- \_\_\_ U.S. Census (<http://www.census.gov>)
- \_\_\_ FedStats (<http://www.fedstats.gov>)
- \_\_\_ PollingReport.com  
(<http://www.pollingreport.com>)
- \_\_\_ PRI Kansas Data  
(<http://www.ku.edu/pri/ksdata/ksdata.shtml>)

#### Internet Information:

- \_\_\_ See the handout "Researching on the Web" to search and evaluate Internet sites.

#### Interviews:

- \_\_\_ Use experts with education or experience in the area of your topic. Try your local phone book for government agencies or businesses that employ someone you could interview.

### Determine what subject headings to use

Think about all the subject headings, or words, you can use to find information on your topic. You may have to search by many different terms to find the right subject heading in a location tool. Be a creative thinker!

Write down all the words or topics you think might lead to information on your topic:

## STEP 3: LOCATE SOURCES OF INFORMATION

In this step you will identify materials that may contain information on your topic. When you complete this step, you will have developed a preliminary bibliography.

Referring to the checklist of location tools and list of possible subject headings you filled out in Step 2, find citations for possible sources of information on your topic. Make sure you write down the complete citation. Refer to the *Landmarks Citation Machine* found under Other Library Resources on the Library Web site, the "Citing Sources" handout, or you may want to check the MLA page in "The New Guide to Writing Research Papers" from Monroe Community College (<http://www.monroecc.edu/depts/library/cover.htm>).

### Periodical articles

Citations for possible periodical articles:

### Statistical information

Citations for possible statistical information:

### Newspaper articles

Citations for possible newspaper articles:

### World Wide Web sites

Citations for possible Web sites:

### Interviews

Citations for possible interviews:

## STEP 4: EVALUATE YOUR INFORMATION

This step will help you decide if the information you have gathered is relevant to your thesis statement.

### Review your thesis statement

Before you begin to evaluate your information sources, refer to your thesis statement in Step 1. Write it down on this page so you can keep it in mind while you are evaluating your sources.

**My thesis statement was:**

### Evaluate your information

Evaluate each source of information that you located in Step 3 using the criteria below.

✓ **CURRENCY:** Is this the most current and most representative information I can find?

✓ **OBJECTIVITY:** Is there any evidence of bias in the information?

✓ **AUTHORITY:** What are the author's credentials? Is she or he an expert on the topic or just a reporter?

✓ **RELEVANCY:** Does the information support my thesis statement, or does it offer any opposing viewpoints?

✓ **COVERAGE:** Are there any ideas of my outline that need more support?

**Make notes here about each source that does not fulfill the criteria.**

**Write down what information you still need to find, if any.** Refer to Steps 2 & 3 to find the information.

### Revise your thesis statement

After reviewing your information sources in relation to your thesis statement, revise the statement **if it has changed**.

**My revised thesis statement is:**